

Punctuating Dialogue Rules

1. Indent for each new speaker.

(New speaker = New paragraph)

2. Only the exact words of the speaker go inside quotation marks.

3. The words used to identify the speaker are called the speaker tag (e.g., Mary said or Jane replied). Words like said, replied, screamed, etc. are never capitalized in a speaker tag.

4. There are three types of speaker tags:

a. Before the quote: the comma always follows the speaker tag and the beginning letter of the quote is always capitalized

Jon asked, "Where did everyone go?"

b. After the quote: the ending punctuation after the actual quote (before the speaker tag) can never be a period.

"Every one decided to go," remarked Jon.

If the sentence would normally end with a period, substitute a comma. An exception to this rule is end marks for questions or exclamations.

"Where did everyone go?" asked Jon.

c. In the Middle of the quote:

1) In between two separate sentences (quotes): a period follows the speaker tag and the beginning of the second sentence (quote) is capitalized.

"I have a dog," said Jane. "Do you have any pets?"

2) When the speaker tag splits one sentence (quote) into two parts: a comma follows the first part of the quote and the speaker tag.

"I have two dogs," said Jane, "that fight all the time."